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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 002456

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - MIDDLE EAST - ARIEL SHARON TO
WASHINGTON EU DEFENSE
PARIS - TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

- [1](#)1. MIDDLE EAST - ARIEL SHARON TO WASHINGTON
- [1](#)2. EU DEFENSE

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

THE EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION AND EU MATTERS ARE VERY MUCH IN THE NEWS. THE LATEST POLL CONDUCTED JOINTLY BY EUROPE ONE RADIO AND RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO SHOWS THAT PROPONENTS OF THE 'NO' FOR THE REFERENDUM ON THE EU CONSTITUTION ARE GAINING GROUND, WITH 53%, AGAINST 47% FOR THE 'YES.' IN AN INTERVIEW IN POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR, INTERIOR MINISTER DE VILLEPIN EXPLAINS WHY "A 'NO' WOULD RENDER EVERYTHING MORE DIFFICULT. FRANCE WOULD NO LONGER CARRY THE SAME WEIGHT ON EUROPEAN ISSUES." IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO, GENERAL JEAN COT PENS AN OP-ED ON THE REASONS WHY HE WILL VOTE 'YES,' TITLED "FOR A EUROPEAN DEFENSE." (SEE PART C)

A CONTROVERSY IS GROWING OVER PRESIDENT CHIRAC'S TELEVISED DEBATE ON TF 1 WITH A PANEL OF 80 PRE-SELECTED STUDENTS ON THURSDAY ON THE EU CONSTITUTION. DETRACTORS, WHICH INCLUDE JOURNALISTS FROM OTHER TELEVISION STATIONS, OBJECT TO THE PARTIALITY OF THE DEBATE, WHICH THEY ALLEGE IS MORE OF A TELEMARKETING OPERATION THAN A POLITICAL DEBATE.

THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL PRESS DEVOTES ITS LEAD TO THE AIRBUS-BOEING SUBSIDY BATTLE. FOR RIGHT-OF-CENTER ECONOMIC LES ECHOS, "THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE TURNING INTO A TUG-OF-WAR." IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO ECONOMIE, PIERRE AVRIL EXPLAINS THAT THE DELAY IN REACHING AN AGREEMENT "IS TAKING THE AIRBUS A 350 HOSTAGE. THE REQUEST FOR ADVANCE LOANS FROM THE FOUR EUROPEAN PARTNERS IS ON HOLD, BUT AS THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION SAID, 'THIS WAITING PERIOD CANNOT GO ON FOREVER.' EU COMMISSIONER MANDELSON HAS CRITICIZED THE AMERICANS FOR THEIR 'PARTIALITY': 'THEY DENOUNCE THE SUBSIDIES WHICH IN THEIR VIEW AIRBUS IS RECEIVING, BUT THEY EXONERATE BOEING.'"

THE MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT BUSH AND ARIEL SHARON IS WIDELY REPORTED, WITH EDITORIAL COMMENTARIES IN THE REGIONAL PRESS. RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE PARISIEN TITLES ITS ARTICLE "BUSH, THE SPONSOR OF PEACE," WHILE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO PHILIPPE GELIE REPORTS THAT "PRESIDENT BUSH IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE NEW SETTLEMENTS." (SEE PART C) RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO INTERVIEWS AVI PAZNER, FORMER ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO PARIS AND SPOKESMAN FOR THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT: "IN EUROPE, YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE TRAGEDY THAT WILL UNFOLD IN ISRAEL WITH THIS WITHDRAWAL. POLITICALLY, SHARON COULD LOSE HIS MAJORITY, AND ON THE GROUND THERE IS THE RISK OF CONFRONTATION. EVERYTHING MUST BE DONE TO AVOID A BLOODBATH."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

MIDDLE EAST - ARIEL SHARON TO WASHINGTON

"BUSH CONCERNED ABOUT NEW SETTLEMENTS"

PHILIPPE GELIE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (04/12): "LAST YEAR, THE ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER LEFT WASHINGTON WITH HIS POCKETS FULL, HAVING RECEIVED NOT ONLY THE PRESIDENT'S APPROVAL FOR HIS WITHDRAWAL PLANS FROM GAZA, BUT ALSO WRITTEN 'GUARANTEES' REGARDING A GLOBAL SETTLEMENT. SINCE THEN A MISUNDERSTANDING PERSISTS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ISRAEL. WHAT SHARON SEES AS A UNILATERAL SOLUTION, IS FOR PRESIDENT BUSH A FIRST STEP THAT CAN PUT THE PEACE PROCESS BACK ON TRACK. YESTERDAY'S TALKS MAY NOT BE ENOUGH TO CLARIFY THIS AMBIGUITY."

"BUSH, SHARON. AND EUROPE"

JULES CLAUWAERT IN REGIONAL NORD LAIR (04/12): "IS GEORGE W. BUSH FINALLY CONVINCED THAT A PEACE AGREEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST MUST BE COMPREHENSIVE, AND THAT IT RESTS ON AN EQUITABLE SOLUTION TO THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT? BY RECEIVING ARIEL SHARON AT HIS TEXAS RANCH, AN HONOR AND FAMILIARITY RESERVED TO THOSE HE CONSIDERS THE BEST FRIENDS OF THE U.S., ONE CAN IMAGINE THAT BUSH IS PUTTING 'FRIENDLY' PRESSURE ON HIS GUEST TO PERSIST IN HIS DECISION TO LIBERATE (SIC) THE GAZA STRIP,

AND TO CONFIRM HIS AGREEMENT ON THE COEXISTENCE OF A VIABLE PALESTINIAN STATE. EUROPE IS ALREADY A MAJOR ECONOMIC POWER. THAT IT HAS ACQUIRED A NEW POLITICAL DIMENSION CAN ONLY FACILITATE ITS INFLUENCE. ON CONDITION THAT THE EUROPEANS THEMSELVES ARE CAPABLE OF RAISING THEIR EYES ABOVE THEIR MOLEHILLS, WHEN THEY CONSOLIDATE THEIR OWN UNION."

"SHARON CALLS ON BUSH FOR RESCUE"

SERGE DUMONT IN REGIONAL LA VOIX DU NORD (04/12): "ACCORDING TO MEMBERS OF HIS ENTOURAGE, ARIEL SHARON INTENDS TO PROFIT FROM HIS TENTH MEETING WITH GEORGE W. BUSH, WHO IS RECEIVING HIM AT HIS RANCH IN TEXAS, TO ASK HIM TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS. .(SHARON) IS LETTING THINGS DRAG ON, BUT HE CAN'T BRUSH ASIDE FOREVER THE `FRIENDLY' SUGGESTIONS OF THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION, ESPECIALLY SINCE HE ALSO CAME TO TEXAS TO ASK HIS ALLIES TO FINANCE THE COST OF THE RETREAT FROM GAZA AS WELL AS THE RESETTLEMENT OF 8,000 COLONISTS EVACUATED TO INSIDE THE JEWISH STATE. ACCORDING TO ESTIMATES, THE COST WILL EXCEED 1.8 BILLION EUROS, TWO-THIRDS OF WHICH IS EXPECTED TO BE PAID BY WASHINGTON."

EU DEFENSE

"FOR EU DEFENSE, I WILL VOTE YES"

GENERAL JEAN COT IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (04/12): "OUR CITIZENS ARE WAY AHEAD OF THEIR POLITICAL LEADERS. FOR EUROPE, THEY WANT GREATER STRATEGIC INDEPENDENCE FROM THE U.S. AND MORE INTEGRATED COMMAND STRUCTURES. WHAT ARE OUR CHOICES? DO WE WANT EUROPE TO BE AN ECONOMIC ECTOPLASM WITH A LITTLE DAB OF SECURITY? OR DO WE WANT EUROPE TO WIDEN ITS SPACE OF PEACE AND ASSUME ITS ROLE FOR BETTER GOVERNANCE? WE MUST HAVE THE COURAGE TO SAY THAT EUROPE, WHICH IS TODAY A GREAT ECONOMIC POWER, REMAINS WITHOUT POLITICAL INFLUENCE AROUND THE WORLD, INCLUDING IN THE MIDDLE EAST, ITS NEIGHBOR. EUROPE SITS ON THE JUMP SEATS, WHICH THE U.S. DEIGNS TO LEAVE FOR HER, IN ITS IMPERIAL APPROACH TO WORLD GOVERNANCE. THE EUROPEANS KNOW THAT THE FINAL OBJECTIVE IS TO REACH COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE IN EUROPE'S DEFENSE, BECAUSE FOR THEM IT IS INCONCEIVABLE TO HAVE 500 MILLION EUROPEANS DEPEND, FOR THEIR DEFENSE AND TO SUCH AN EXTENT, ON 280 MILLION AMERICANS." LEACH